

# Public WORKS



A publication of the  
Marin County Department  
of Public Works  
PEOPLE SERVING PEOPLE

Volume 2, Number 1

FALL 2009

## From the Director

**WHAT'S GOING ON** with Marin County's roads? Some months ago a Metropolitan Transportation Authority survey ranked the county's road system "second worst" in the Bay Area. In the midst of the state's budget crisis, the newspapers were full of proposals at the state level to take away local road maintenance funding. This kind of news is particularly dispiriting, as our staff works tirelessly to keep our roads paved and safe for drivers.

Beyond the boundaries of Marin's 11 cities and towns are some 420 miles of roadway in constant need of maintenance and repair. Measured in lane miles, our stretch of county streets and highways is comparable to a drive from here to Los Angeles and back, twice.

Traffic and Mother Nature do their best to wear down these surfaces, and we have no choice but to keep pace. Our daily challenge is to maintain these many miles within county jurisdiction with funds available from traditional sources — primarily state and federal government allocations and a portion of the gasoline tax paid by drivers at the pump. The actual value of available road maintenance funding has been declining for a number of years as a result of state policies and inflation. Addressing this shortfall, the County Board of Supervisors in 2006 dedicated more than \$20 million to Marin's road system improvements. Still, there remains a maintenance backlog of more than ten times that amount.

Public Works continually explores ways to make each scarce dollar go farther. We're exploring new construction techniques, alternative funding mechanisms, and partnerships with other agencies to improve efficiency. We remain fully committed to this fundamental public service.

*Farhad Mansourian, Public Works Director  
415.499.6530*

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

### CUPA: Coordinating Marin's hazardous materials prevention programs



Top of mind for the the Waste Management division is protecting Marin County residents, businesses, and communities — as well as the environment — from damage caused by hazardous materials. And this important job requires coordination with a number of local, state, and federal agencies.

At the center of this effort is CUPA, the Certified Unified Program Agency.

CUPA's mission is to simplify California's hazardous materials regulatory environment, to educate the public about hazardous materials, and to serve as a single point of contact to address inspection, permitting, billing, and enforcement issues. CUPA regulates County businesses that handle hazardous materials, such as gas stations, automotive repair shops, larger hardware stores, paint shops and municipal agencies with chemicals and hazardous materials on site. The program develops response plans for hazardous materials sites as well as accidental release prevention, an underground storage tank program, and hazardous materials management under the fire code.

CUPA was established in 1993 under the umbrella of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Its primary responsibility is to consolidate, coordinate, and ensure consistent administration of permits, inspections, and enforcement activities among the County's six environmental and emergency programs. While state agencies set environmental program standards, local governments implement these standards.

*Contact Eric Lueder at 415.499.6580*



*Inset: A County employee receives hazardous materials training.  
Above: An underground fuel tank is carefully removed.*

## TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

### Making Marin's streets safer for all



Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, a major east-west connector in Marin County, is now a little safer for school children, pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. At the intersection across from Bacich School in Kentfield, with its 45-year-old signal lights and traffic island, vehicles were allowed to turn right, even when the through-signal was red. Drivers could not easily see pedestrians crossing to these islands — a potentially hazardous situation for all.

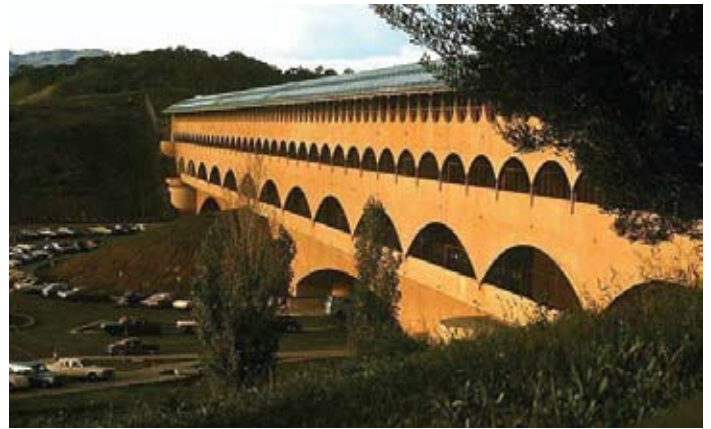
The County's Traffic Operations Engineer has made the intersection much safer by installing new traffic signals and pedestrian crossing lights that now control the right-turn pocket. A flashing yellow right arrow warns drivers to use caution when turning, and the arrow turns red if a pedestrian pushes the crosswalk button. The new signal lights indicating the right turn adhere to state standards and are being used as an experiment to improve traffic safety.

Other recently completed projects in the county include the installation of video detection cameras at a number of busy intersections with heavy bicycle traffic. Light signals now change when cameras detect bicycles in the intersection, allowing cyclists to cross safely with a green light. For details about this program and the locations of these cameras, visit [www.walkbikemarin.org](http://www.walkbikemarin.org).

*Contact Eric Steger at 415.507.2754*



New traffic signals and crossing lights have improved safety for vehicles and pedestrians at this busy Kentfield intersection.



Built in the early 1960s, the Marin Civic Center's classic lines have not changed, but technological upgrades continue on the inside.

## BUILDING MAINTENANCE

### Let there be light, and conservation

Energy conservation and efficiency are not just goals for the County's Building Maintenance Division — they're a way of life. The division manages more than 47 County-owned buildings, from small flood-control pump stations to large complexes such as the Civic Center.

For the division's 26 motivated employees, energy conservation is a key component of their work — and they have their work cut out for them as they modify the County's older building systems with modern technologies. Originally, the 40-year-old Civic Center's lighting systems were controlled manually. Night-court schedules and other after-hours work in the buildings required a fairly tedious attention to switching lights on and off. Starting in 1998, the division installed timer switches and computer links to the lighting systems along with energy efficient florescent lighting, and has saved more than a quarter of a million dollars annually with these modifications.

Building Maintenance is going beyond improvements in lighting control to conserve energy. It is replacing old and inefficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and retrofitting existing mechanical systems to improve efficiency. Some closed mechanical systems are now using reclaimed water. In addition, bathroom facilities have been replaced with low-flow systems to save water.

The County was also one of the first to install solar panels on the roofs of its facilities. During the summer months, an array of solar panels on the County Garage fully powers its lights and other systems. Solar panels have also been placed on the roofs of the Health and Human Services Building, the Health and Wellness Campus, and the Marin Center Exhibition Hall, to further reduce the County's environmental footprint.

*Contact Kevin McGowan at 415.499.3076  
or Rich Wallace at 415.499.6954*

## MARIN COUNTY AIRPORT

### Gnoss Field: Doing business, serving communities, having fun

Gnoss Field, Marin's only public use airport, is celebrating its 50th year. Three miles north of Novato, tucked next to Highway 101 directly across from Olompali State Park, Gnoss occupies 120 acres and includes a 3,300 foot lighted runway. The airport is staffed and maintained by Public Works.

Opened in 1968, today's Gnoss Field handles some 85,000 inbound and outbound flights a year, operating 24/7 in all but the worst weather conditions. Home to nearly 300 aircraft, Gnoss Field hosts everything from small recreational planes to light corporate jets.

The local chapter of Angel Flights — a national group offering free air transportation to young people in need of medical treatment — flies in and out of Gnoss Field with increasing frequency. Gnoss also has been active as a point of departure for local organ and tissue medical transfer teams.

Staff recently finished reconstruction of the levees surrounding the airport to protect the facility and to address environmental issues. This project converted once-unusable land to waterways and riparian areas that immediately became a favorite of egrets and herons.

A federal Environmental Impact Study and a state Environmental Impact Report are currently underway to assess the potential effect of a proposed runway extension. Details are available at [www.gnossfeldeis-eir.com](http://www.gnossfeldeis-eir.com). Gnoss Field is a valuable community resource and a great place to visit for young and old alike.

*Contact Ken Robbins at 415.897.1754*



Gnoss Field provides great views of aircraft large and small.



The view from Mount Burdell Open Space Preserve

## REAL ESTATE DIVISION

### Preserving and protecting county land

Why does a no-growth county like Marin need a Real Estate Division? The answer: To provide a wide range of real estate services for our county — from office leasing arrangements to road and flood control easement acquisitions; from property management to land management — often working with other governmental agencies to accomplish common goals.

The division played an instrumental role in the success of the multi-phase Novato Flood Control Project. Real Estate was involved from the beginning of this 25-year process, acquiring hundreds of easements that allowed the construction of environmentally sensitive improvements to reduce the threat of floods for Novato businesses and residents.

Traveling around Marin — by car or bike, on horseback or on foot — you're likely to see a building, road, creek, park, or open-space area that Real Estate has had a hand in acquiring or preserving for public benefit and use. In the early 1970s Marin County pioneered the development of one of the first Open Space Districts in California. Before this district was formed, community members banded together to form a community service area (CSA), which taxed itself to raise funds to purchase and preserve undeveloped open space. Many smaller CSAs were eventually incorporated into what is now known as the county's Open Space District, part of Marin's Parks and Open Space Department.

The Open Space District and many of Marin's 15,000 acres of open space lands reflect the dedication and commitment of district staff. Real Estate staff has had the good fortune to assist the district in land acquisition and related issues over the years. Today, the division continues to work with the district to fulfill the goal of preserving 30,000 acres of open space in Marin, all in accordance with California and federal laws for public land acquisition.

*Contact Terry Toner at 415.499.7279*



**WASTE MANAGEMENT**

**Going greener in Marin**

A new website developed by the Waste Management Division, [MarinGreenGuide.org](http://MarinGreenGuide.org), makes it easy to find green resources and approved guidelines for ecologically sound solutions. It also provides information about sustainable practices the County is actively pursuing.

The site serves as a portal, or gateway, to more than 130 other sites that contain detailed information on specific subjects — from alternative fuel resources to creek protection and preservation. On the home page, topics are organized into eight categories: Business Practices, Energy, Green Building, Land Management, Permits, Recycling and Reuse, Transportation, and Water Resources.

The site also includes a weekly calendar of “Green Events in Marin,” describing upcoming local and regional activities that promote action and raise environmental awareness.

*Contact Michael Frost at 415.499.3725  
or Eric Lueder at 415.499.6580*

**PEOPLE SERVING PEOPLE**

**Public WORKS** is published by the  
Marin County Department of Public Works  
*Farhad Mansourian, Director*

3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 304  
San Rafael, CA 94903  
Phone: 415.499.6528  
[www.co.marin.ca.us](http://www.co.marin.ca.us)

If you are a person with a disability and require this document in an alternate format (example: Braille, large print, audiotape, CD-ROM), you may request an alternate format by calling 415.473.4381 (voice) or 415.473.3232 (TTY) or by e-mail at [disabilityaccess@co.marin.ca.us](mailto:disabilityaccess@co.marin.ca.us).



**FLOOD CONTROL**

**Marin’s Watershed Program:  
Enhanced resource management**

Watersheds — the intricate relationship between land and creeks, streams and rivers — define the County we live in. Watersheds move and store water, carve stream channels, carry sediment from the mountains to the beaches and provide year-round habitat for some wildlife (meeting critical needs of others during annual migrations). In Marin County, the major watersheds are bisected by streams that enter San Pablo and San Francisco Bays to the east and south, and Tomales Bay, the Pacific Ocean, and Bodega Bay to the west.

A change in one element affects the shape and function of an entire watershed. Land-use changes often have far-reaching effects. A new subdivision, a new freeway, a new shopping center can significantly alter the way water travels, causing erosion, flooding, and disturbance of wildlife habitats. Careful management of these natural resources safely controls how water moves across our public and private lands.

Marin’s Watershed Program is working to enhance our communal understanding of the ways watersheds function and about the long-term consequences of building on these watersheds. The program’s goal is to gather information and develop tools to better support public agencies in their efforts to manage these resources. These tools also guide Flood Control’s creek maintenance and restoration programs.

*Contact Liz Lewis or Chris Choo at 415.499.7586*



Easkoot Creek Watershed in Stinson Beach looking north toward Bolinas Lagoon



Young volunteers learn creek restoration techniques.